



# Committee on HOMELAND SECURITY

Chairman Michael McCaul

## Opening Statement

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### **Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas) Committee on Homeland Security**

#### **Organizational Meeting**

#### **Remarks as Prepared**

I would like to welcome all the members of the Committee on Homeland Security to the 114th Congress, both our new members and those returning. As members of this Committee, we have the solemn responsibility to keep the homeland safe – a job that becomes more and more complex every day. I am proud of the work this Committee has done over the past two years. We have always aimed to work in a bipartisan fashion and I would like to thank the Ranking Member for his commitment and dedication that made the successes of last Congress possible. I am happy we will be able to continue this relationship and work together toward our common goals over the next term.

In the 113th Congress we held almost 100 hearings, 8 of them field hearings, and passed 31 bills out of Committee. We also had 28 bills considered and passed on the House floor and 12 of these were signed into law. More important than the numbers is the impact our legislation will have. As a result of the work we did in the 113th Congress, our chemical facilities will be better protected from terrorists, American travelers will not be overcharged by TSA, and our nation's veterans will be treated with dignity and respect at our airports.

Additionally, I am very proud that the cyber bills we passed were the most significant cybersecurity legislation to pass Congress in over a decade. Cyber threat information will be enhanced and improved and America's cyber workforce will be strengthened.

All these bills were passed with strong bipartisan support.

Despite these successes, there is more work to be done. The threats we face are becoming more and more dynamic and our enemies more creative. Because of this reality, the Committee on Homeland Security must redouble our efforts, remain vigilant and continue to work together.

In the 114th Congress, the Committee will again focus on counterterrorism efforts both at home and abroad. The threat to the homeland from ISIS and al Qaeda and its affiliates is growing, not diminishing. Battle hardened individuals with valid western passports fighting in Syria and Iraq are potentially one flight away from our shores. The ability of ISIS and other terrorist groups to reach U.S. citizens vulnerable to jihad through sophisticated online propaganda is also an area of great concern. We must deal with this as a threat to our security.

Our borders remain insecure and are a matter of national security. Helping to ensure DHS has complete control of our borders will remain a priority for the Committee. We will start this effort today, by considering H.R. 399, the Secure Our Border First Act. This is the toughest border security bill in the history of the Congress and focuses on matching technology and aviation assets to the threats in each sector of the border. This will allow the Border Patrol to gain complete visibility of the southern border for the first time.

I can think of few greater threats posed to our nation than from a massive cyber attack on our power grid, water supply or other critical infrastructure. We must do more to ensure our nation is able to respond to the growing cyber threat. Much was done last Congress, but there is plenty more to do. I will lead a renewed effort to further protect our nation's most critical networks from cyber attacks.

Another priority for this Committee will be ensuring federal, state and local law enforcement and first responders are fully prepared to respond to natural disasters, terrorist attacks and biological threats.

Lastly, the Department of Homeland Security has never been re-authorized by Congress since it was established in 2002. This lack of authorization has translated into a lack of binding guidelines for the Department for the last 12 years. This is an abdication of Congress's responsibility and it is unacceptable. Therefore, one of the highest priorities of the Committee will be to pass the first-ever DHS re-authorization, through regular order in partnership with the other Committees of jurisdiction.

During the course of this organizational meeting, we will adopt the Committee's Oversight Plan, the Committee Rules, and a pro forma Hiring Resolution. These documents symbolize the Committee's commitment to a strong bipartisan effort going forward to accomplish the goals which are so essential to our national security.

I would again like to thank Ranking Member Thompson and his Staff for their collaborative and congenial approach to working with us to fine-tune the Committee Rules to facilitate increased transparency, deliberation, and partnership.

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